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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
28 October 1966

State Department review completed

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

There have been no reports to confirm the agreement outlined by Premier Ky that four of the dissenting ministers will remain in the cabinet. The South Vietnamese Government is attempting to resolve the delicate issue of political prisoners still under detention.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: South Vietnamese soldiers report killing 137 Viet Cong in a day-long battle in the Mekong Delta province of Phong Dinh (Para. 1). American soldiers participating in Operation THAYER II in northern Binh Dinh Province report light contact with elements of the 610th NVA Division (Para. 2). Operation ALLENTOWN ended on 27 October after a week-long sweep of rivers and canals north of Saigon (Para. 3). A US ammunition depot near Bien Hoa exploded on 28 October (Para. 4). Weekly review of South Vietnam battle statistics (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: There have been no reports to confirm the agreement outlined by Premier Ky on 27 October that four of the dissident ministers will remain in the cabinet (Para. 1). The government has begun to resolve the fate of political prisoners, which has been a delicate issue for the past several years (Paras. 2-6).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:

[redacted] there have been no reactions to hostile aircraft since 9 October (Paras. 1-3).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. Communist Political Developments: Eastern European diplomats have recently been claiming that there has been some give in the North Vietnamese position for settling the war (Paras. 1-2). [redacted]

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[redacted] The North Vietnamese are attempting to drum up support for the upcoming mock "war crimes" trial sponsored by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (Paras. 7-8).

VI. Other Major Aspects: [redacted] of northwestern North Vietnam shows construction of permanent storage facilities along the Lao Cai - Yen Bai road (Paras. 1-4).

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ANNEX:

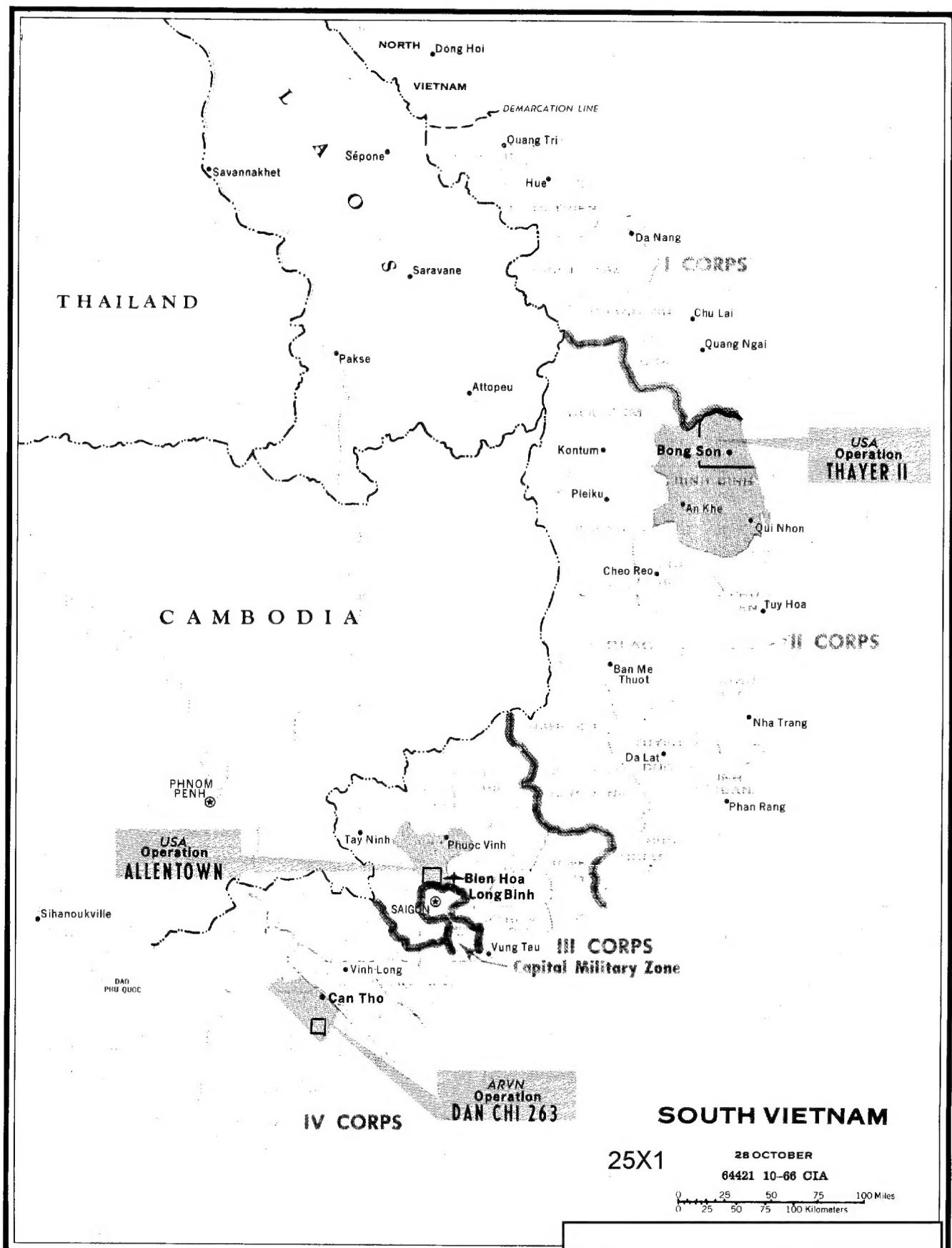
South Vietnam Battle Statistics
1963 through 16-22 Oct 1966:
-Weapons and Personnel Losses
-Viet Cong Attacks and Incidents

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A new South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) drive in the area of the Mekong River Delta has been successful in its initial engagement with Communist troops. Three ARVN battalions participating in Operation DAN CHI 263-- which began on 26 October in an area about 30 miles southeast of Can Tho--reported killing 137 Viet Cong in a day-long battle on 27 October. The ARVN force, which included the crack 42nd and 44th ARVN battalions, encountered two guerrilla battalions of up to 1,200 men in the rice fields of Phong Dinh Province.

2. US Army 1st Air Cavalry Division troops reported killing 13 Communist soldiers eight miles north of Bong Son on 27 October as Operation THAYER II continued to sweep the northeastern section of coastal Binh Dinh Province in search of elements of the 610th NVA Division. Twelve enemy soldiers were captured in the action. No American casualties were reported.

3. Operation ALLENTOWN, conducted by two battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division, ended on 27 October following a week-long sweep of rivers and canals five to 15 miles north of Saigon in Binh Duong Province. A total of 47 Viet Cong were reported killed and one captured. Fifteen sampans were destroyed. One American was reported killed and four wounded.

4. A US ammunition dump at Long Binh, about seven miles north of Saigon, exploded on 28 October killing at least two American military policemen and wounding more than five others. Although Viet Cong guerrillas have been active in this area, it is not yet known if a well-placed mortar shell was not responsible for the blast. Long Binh is a supply area for the US 1st and 25th Infantry divisions and is located near the huge American base at Bien Hoa. A large hospital is also in the area.

Weekly Review of South Vietnam Battle Statistics

5. The week of 16-22 October compared with the week of 9-15 October:

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I. Viet Cong Incidents

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>At-tacks</u>	<u>Regimental size</u>	<u>Battalion size</u>
9-15 Oct	37	0	2
16-22 Oct	51	0	2

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Company size</u>	<u>Harassment</u>	<u>Terrorism</u>
9-15 Oct	6	347	25
16-22 Oct	2	398	29

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Sabo-tage</u>	<u>Propa-ganda</u>	<u>Anti-Aircraft</u>	<u>Total Incidents</u>
9-15 Oct	26	20	153	608
16-22 Oct	34	10	193	715

II. Casualties

	VC/NVA		GVN	
	<u>9-15 Oct</u>	<u>16-22 Oct</u>	<u>9-15 Oct</u>	<u>16-22 Oct</u>
Killed	993	1,229	189	339
Wounded	---	-----	504	623
Missing/ Captured	<u>748</u>	<u>606</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>89</u>
TOTALS	1,741	1,835	778	1,051

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	US		FREE WORLD	
	9-15 Oct	16-22 Oct	9-15 Oct	16-22 Oct
Killed	73	62	26	11
Wounded	432	394	48	42
Missing/ Captured	<u>2</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	507	471	74	53

III. Weapons Captured

	VC/NVA		GVN	
	9-15 Oct	16-22 Oct	9-15 Oct	16-22 Oct
Individual Crew-Served	356	Not Reported	244	331
<u>26</u>			<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
TOTALS	382		247	334

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. There have been no reports to confirm the agreement of four of the seven dissident ministers to remain in the cabinet as outlined by Premier Ky in a conversation with a US Embassy official on 27 October.

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[REDACTED] Previously, Premier Ky stated that he would simply refuse to accept the resignations of the four, and they would not press the issue further. [REDACTED] the other three dissident ministers--Thanh, Trieu, and Truong--will definitely be leaving the cabinet. Their replacements, however, apparently are not yet firm.

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GVN Attitudes and Actions in Regard to Political Prisoners

2. The issue of political prisoners, a thorny problem for Vietnamese governments, for the past several years, appears to be headed towards partial resolution. The government has decided that those individuals who are still under detention as a result of the three most significant political upheavals in recent years (November 1960, November 1963, and the "Struggle Movement" of 1966) shall be tried, freed, or given amnesty or reductions in sentences.

3. According to a semiofficial press release, the government plans to conclude as soon as possible those cases still pending before the courts. In all cases to be tried, as well as in cases already adjudicated, amnesty or reductions in sentences will be considered if it can be shown that the defendants had acted in accordance with orders of their superiors or within the framework of their duties. This principle appears to be designed for those whose major fault was being on the losing side, although it may be extended to those who have been accused or convicted of such tangible acts as physical violence against other persons.

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4. No significant participants in the attempted coup of November 1960 are known to be still imprisoned, since most of those political prisoners were released following Diem's overthrow in 1963. Several former officials of the Diem regime have recently been released. Saigon Mayor Van Van Cua has acknowledged that "trial balloons" have been floated concerning the possible release of Major Dang Sy and Tran Kim Tuyen, ex-Diem officials who were the subjects of particular Buddhist animosity.

5. The legal processing of large numbers of minor participants in the "Struggle Movement" is also expected to begin soon. Approximately 450 non-commissioned officers and men are to be returned to active military service, a number of other military personnel will be arraigned before military courts, and a number of civilian cases will be turned over to the National Police for disposition. There is a possibility that some less extreme Buddhist "strugglers" will also be released on 1 November.

6. Such actions by the government appear calculated to console both Catholics and moderate Buddhists and to generate some good will among these elements toward the government. These actions may also dispel charges of "police statism" leveled against the government by its domestic critics, and undercut the ability of aroused southern regionalists to garner antigovernment sympathy from other political elements.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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2. One reason for the lack of North Vietnamese reaction for several weeks is the generally poor weather over North Vietnam which has decreased the number of sorties flown by US strike aircraft. Another is that most of the US effort in the last few weeks has been concentrated south of the 20th parallel. North Vietnamese fighters have seldom attempted to engage US aircraft that far south because of the distance from their airfields and their lack of effective ground-control intercept capability in that area.

3. In addition to the above factors, past experience has shown that the aggressiveness of DRV fighters has come in relatively short and concentrated bursts. In each instance, DRV losses have been out of proportion to their successes in thwarting US strikes.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In a series of contacts with US officials subsequent to the recent meeting of Communist leaders in Moscow, East European diplomats have claimed that there has been some give in the North Vietnamese position on settling the war. As evidence of this softening in the DRV position, some East Europeans have claimed that the DRV is no longer insisting that the Liberation Front be the sole representative of South Vietnam. Pressing this point, the East European diplomats have strongly hinted that if there was some give in the US position--specifically a cessation of the bombings--movement might be advanced toward negotiations.

2. There is no hard evidence, to confirm that there has been any change in Hanoi's position on this point. Publicly, Hanoi has continued to reiterate its standard position on the role of the Front. An article on the Manila Conference in the party daily Nhan Dan of 27 October, for example, insisted that the US recognize the NFLSV as the "sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people."

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5. A Polish Foreign Ministry official at the UN has informed a member of the US delegation that a Polish party delegation will visit Hanoi. The Polish officials stated that the trip is planned as part of Warsaw's "continuing effort to persuade Hanoi to seek a negotiated settlement."

6. It is clear from this series of consultations and visits that the Communists have made a decision to demonstrate their support for North Vietnam. Given Hanoi's cold response in the past to suggestions that it soften its line on negotiations, however, it is unlikely that any of these delegations strenuously urged Hanoi to make any real change in its demands.

Hanoi Urges Support for Mock War Crimes Trial

7. The North Vietnamese are attempting to drum up support and enthusiasm among international leftist groups for the upcoming mock "war crimes" trial of leading US political figures sponsored by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

8. No firm date has been set for the trial nor has a definite location for it been established. A preliminary committee is, however, scheduled to meet in London on 13 November and will reportedly reveal further details at that time. The extent of North Vietnamese participation in the proposed trial is not known although Hanoi might possibly send a delegation of jurists or legal experts to provide evidence on the alleged US "war crimes," if the "trial" takes place in a leftist or neutral country.

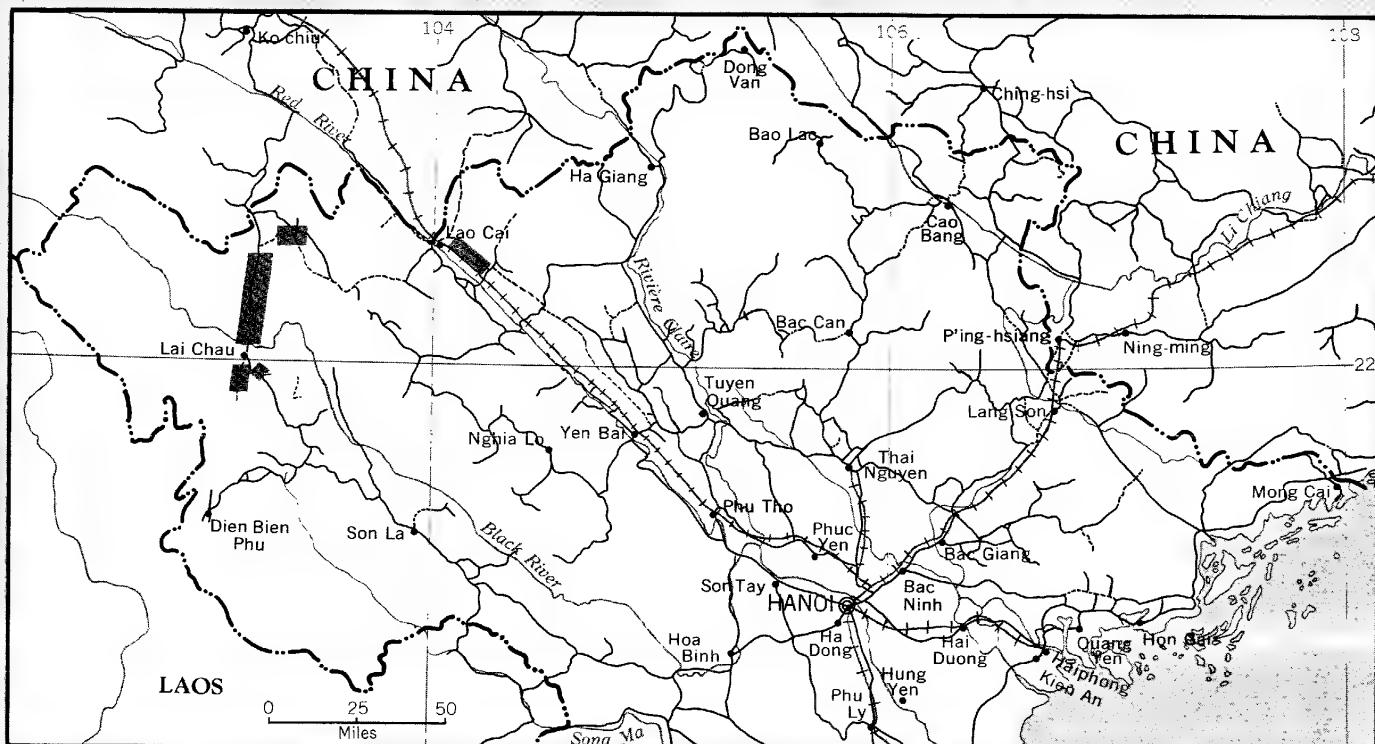
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NORTHWEST DRV ROAD SERVED STORAGE SITES



— Road

++ Railroad

----- Road improvement

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

permanent, in contrast to temporary construction support facilities also found along the road. These may be the first of many permanent facilities to be built following the pattern of other new or improved roads in northwest North Vietnam. The other roads have been provided with storage sites, barracks, and secure telecommunications lines.

2. The Lao Cai - Yen Bai road is probably being built to supplement the parallel Lao Cai - Yen Bai rail line. The additional capacity it will provide will be useful for various military contingencies such as the necessity to deliver aid through Yunnan Province in China rather than along the primary routes from Ping-hsiang.

3. Currently there appears to be little need for a supplement to the rail line. Throughout the last year or so, there has been less effort to repair bomb damage to the Lao Cai line than to the Hanoi - Ping-hsiang Railroad. The latter is the normal route for deliveries from China, and during the last year has been kept open and improved despite frequent air attacks.

4. Construction of the Lao Cai - Yen Bai Road has been underway for about a year. Progress has been slow compared to the pace of construction noted for priority roads in Military Region IV or the Laos panhandle, even though the project has probably been assisted by Chinese engineers.

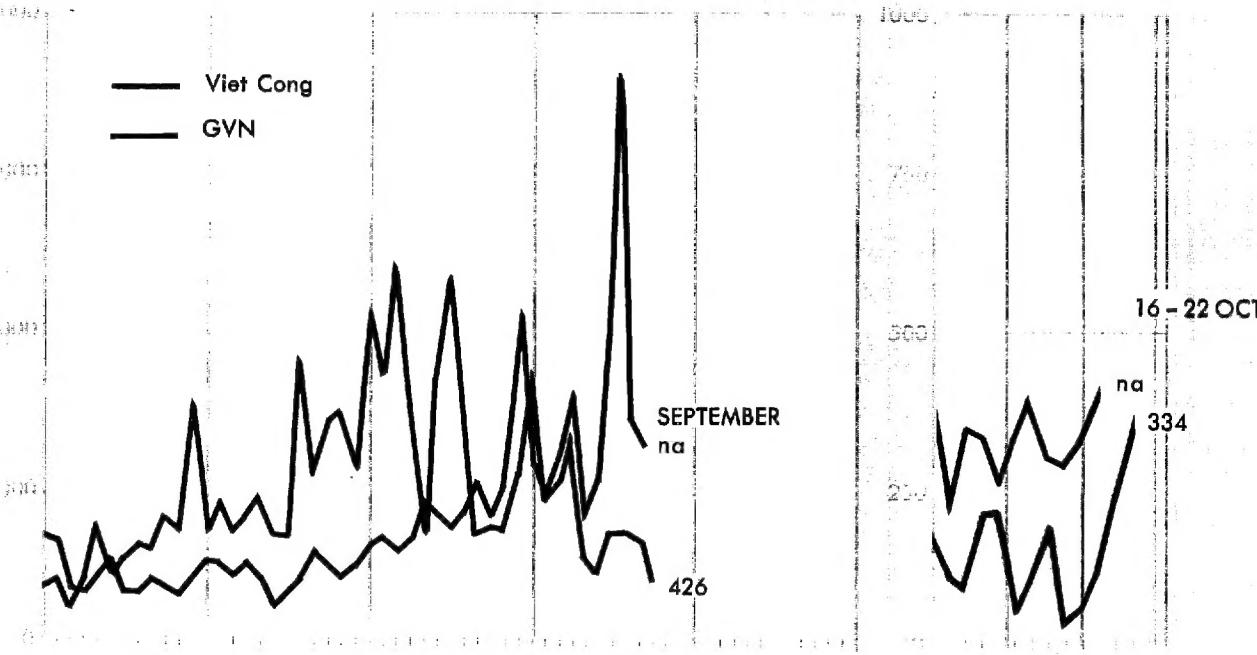
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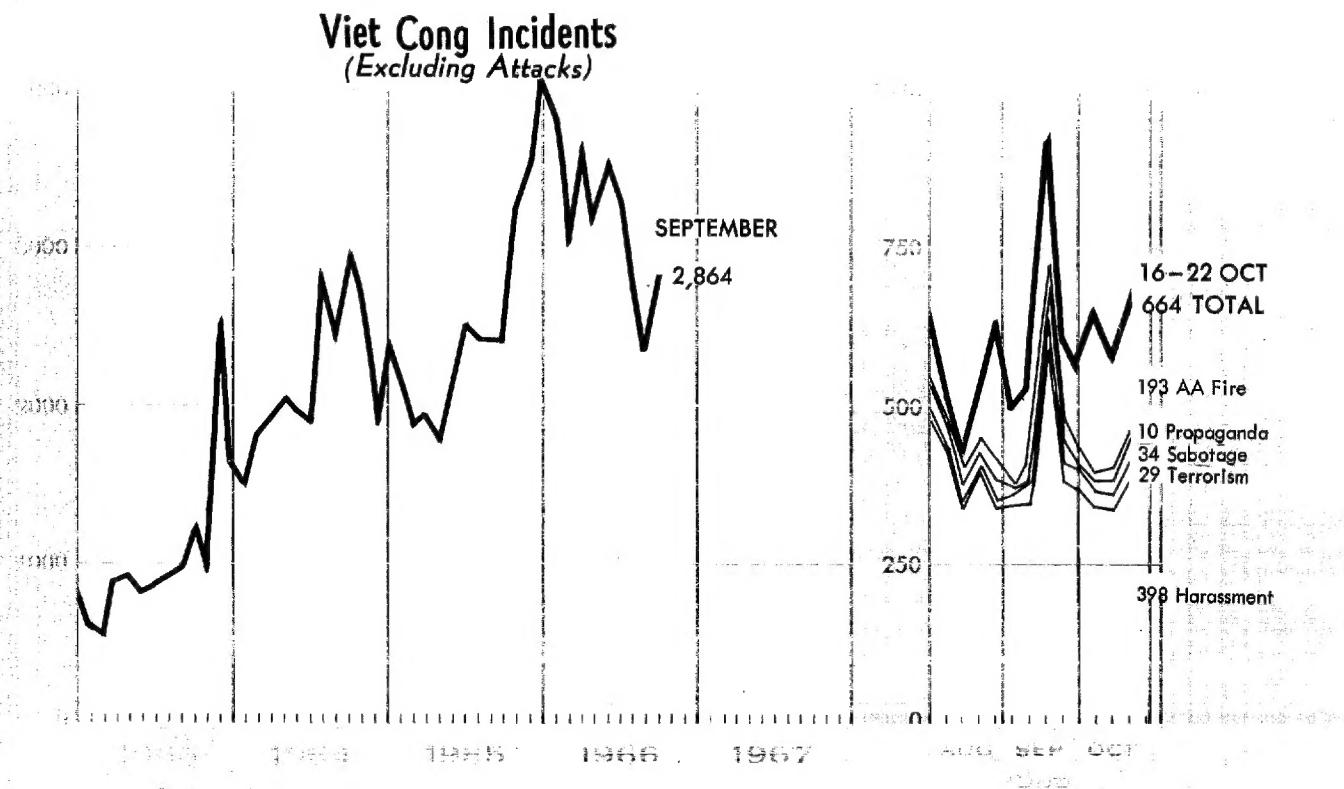
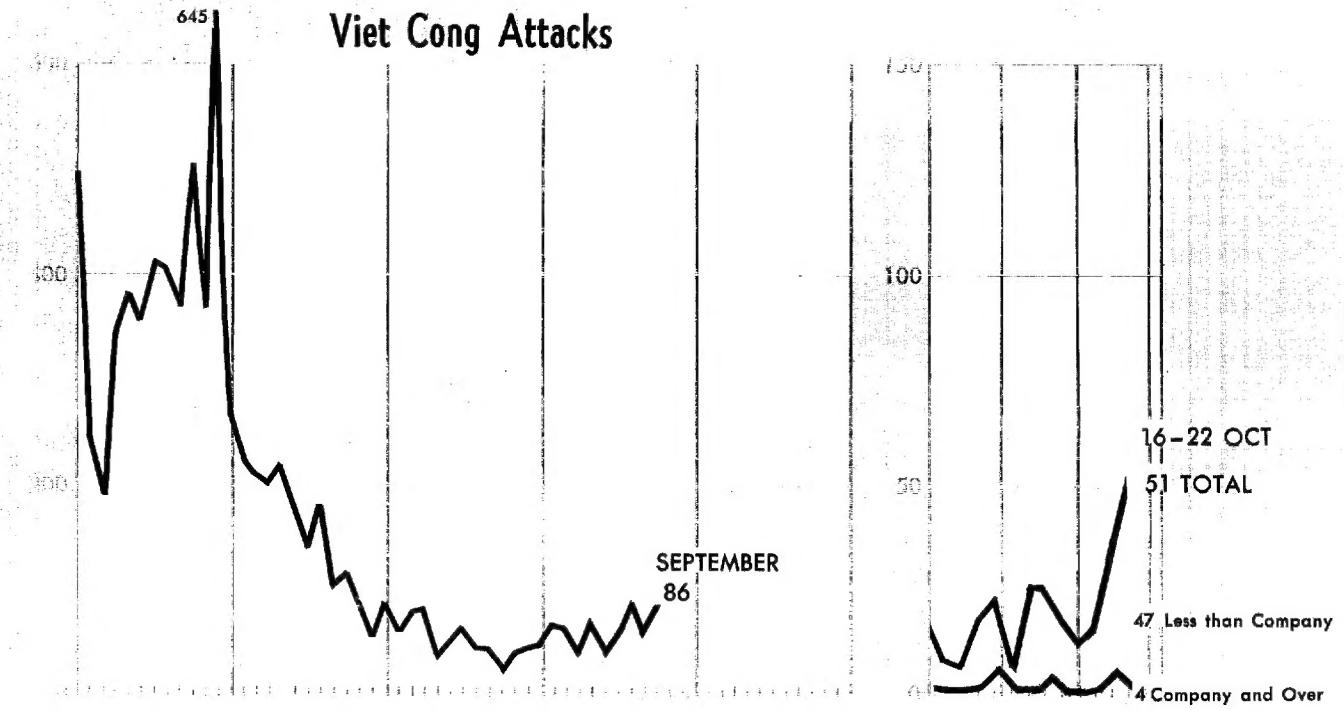
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Weapons Losses

Viet Cong
 GVN



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